

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

A record of the Heath Rat, *Pseudomys shortridgei* and other fauna from Dragon Rocks Nature Reserve - During 3 - 9 June 1992 the southern section of Dragon Rocks Nature Reserve (A Class Reserve No. 36128, Shire of Lake Grace) was trapped as part of a project examining the biology and ecology of the threatened Western Mouse *Pseudomys occidentalis*. This involved regular six weekly trapping sessions each over five nights, using medium Elliott traps (30 x 10 x 10 cm) baited with a mixture of peanut butter, rolled oats and sultantas. On 8 June a male Heath Rat *P. shortridgei* was captured 500 m north of Dragon Rocks and 100 m west of Dragon Rocks Road (33°49'05", 119°02'04"). The specimen weighed 59.6 g, had a head length of 37.3 mm, and a pes of 25.3 mm. It was retained and accessed into the W.A. Museum collection (M39967). Vegetation at the capture site was Very Open Shrub Mallee over Heath A over Very Open Tall Sedges on Sandy Clay Loam soils with a laterite gravel component. The vegetation had not been burnt for 30 - 50 years. This individual was trapped in association with *P. occidentalis*, *Mus musculus* and *Sminthopsis crassicaudata*.

This record is significant as the last Heath Rat record for this area was in 1931 from near Lake Bidby, 25 km SSE of the current capture site at Dragon Rocks (M1389 and M1306). More recent records have been from the Fitzgerald River National Park and Ravensthorpe Range area 200 km to the south. This species was not recorded in the previous surveys of Dragon Rocks Nature Reserve in the 1970s by the then Fisheries and Wildlife Department and in later trapping exercises by the Department

of Conservation and Land Management. It is likely that this species is surviving at low densities within Dragon Rocks Nature Reserve.

Other interesting fauna recorded for Dragon Rocks Nature Reserve include Mallee Fowl *Leipoa ocellata*, Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula*, Mitchell's Hopping Mouse *Notomys mitchellii*, Ningui *Ningui yvonnae* and Stripe-faced Dunnart *Sminthopsis macroura*.

- LEIGH WHISSON, CALM, W.A. Wildlife Research Centre, P.O. Box 51, Wanneroo W.A. 6065

Observations on Honey Possums - During a visit to Cape Arid National Park from 7 - 11 October 1993, a small area supporting a large number of Honey Possums *Tarsipes rostratus* was discovered. A population estimated to be in the hundreds was seen feeding mainly on *Calothamnus* sp. The vegetation was a dense dune thicket, consisting mainly of *Banksia speciosa* and *Calothamnus* sp. The animals were feeding throughout the day. This is unusual as they have been recorded to feed almost entirely at night (Wooler *et al.* 1993. *J. Zool., Lond.*, 229: 651-658). The animals tended to be more numerous after 1630hrs and in the early morning before 0930hrs. The bushes were not surveyed after 1930hrs, but on one occasion they were checked at 2100hrs, and the animals were still feeding. The weather was cold and rainy, but even when the sun came out the possums were active.

It was possible for an observer to sit within 0.5 m of the bushes without a reaction from the animals as long as movements were slow and talking soft. It took about 10 minutes for the